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ARE ROUNDOUT BRIGADES A VIABLE CONCEPT FOR THE FUTURE?

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL RONALD R. ROLLISON, FA

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# ARE ROUNDOUT BRIGADES A VIABLE CONCEPT FOR THE FUTURE? AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

bу

Lieutenant Colonel Ronald R. Rollison, FA

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#### **ABSTRACT**

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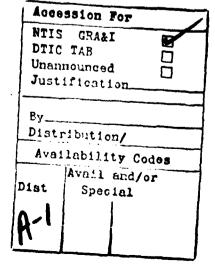
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

			Page
ABSTRACT			ii
TABLE OF	CONT	rents	iii
CHAPTER I	I.	INTRODUCTION	
	- •	Background	
	II.	CURRENT ROUNDOUT POSTURE	
	11.		
		OCONUS	
		CONUS	-
		Rationale	_
III.	III.	ISSUES	
		Doctrine	. 8
		Training	. 11
		Mobilization	. 11
		Equipment	
		National Will	
	IV.	CONCLUSIONS	
14.	1 * •	Doctrine	
		Training	
		Mobilization	
		Equipment	
		National Will	19
	v.	WRAP-UP	22
		Recommendations	
RIBLIOGR	APHY.		





# ARE ROUNDOUT BRIGADES A VIABLE CONCEPT FOR THE FUTURE? CHAPTER I

#### INTRODUCTION

In an interview with a division commander in November 1989, as a part of the Division Commander's Lessons Learned Program, the division commander raised the issue of disconnects in written tactical doctrine, and the way in which he actually had to fight his division. The commander has a roundout National Guard brigade whose deployment arrival time to the overseas wartime location is much later than his arrival with the active portion of the division. His concern stems from the fact that doctrine is written for divisions of three brigades each. Because of the late arrival of his National Guard brigade, he must fight a two brigade division force for some period of time. Although his concern was with the disconnect in doctrine and what must take place in actual practice, it may now be time to relook the concept of rounding out active divisions with National Guard and Army Reserve brigades. This study, though by no means a comprehensive approach, will attempt to address the disconnect in Army doctrine versus the way roundout divisions fight. In addition, it will address some of the concerns that may now make the roundout concept obsolete in the current and future environment.

## **BACKGROUND**

Although the Army has listed a multitude of reasons that the roundout concept solves many active and reserve component problems, one of the most important reasons is grounded in the fact that the Army did not want to "take down" any of the eighteen active duty division flags. The roundout concept did, however, address many other issues. In the early to mid seventies, the post-Vietnam era saw a dramatic reduction in the active duty strength of the Army. Since no division flags were taken down, the active units became more and more hollow. The roundout concept filled out these divisions and allowed personnel assets to be cross-leveled to make units viable. It also gave new emphasis to the reserve component units, since they were now tied to active duty fighting forces, and put meaning into the idea of a "Total Army." This new emphasis resulted in new and modern equipment that began to bring the reserve components up to the level of active units in terms of capabilities. In many cases, training of the reserve component units, now linked to training of various active forces, also improved as assets and emphasis improved for the reserve component units. Another major reason for the link of reserve components to active forces through the roundout concept was the desire, in the wake of Vietnam, never again to allow the country to prosecute a major war without national commitment. If the U.S. wants to conduct a major war in the future and commit divisions, it will have to mobilize the reserve components, i.e., the roundout units. That act, filled with emotion and politics, would insure American

resolve and commitment, one way or the other.

The idea of rounding out active divisions with reserve component units, primarily National Guard, has spread to more than just the maneuver battalions and brigades of the division. Currently, the Army has reserve component roundout units in the maneuver brigades, the division artilleries, the division support command, and the division troops of active divisions.

#### CHAPTER II

#### CURRENT ROUNDOUT POSTURE

## **OCONUS**

The Army has eighteen active duty divisions of which seven are outside of the continental United States (OCONUS).

1st Armored Division - Germany

3rd Infantry Division - "

3rd Armored Division - "

8th Infantry Division - "

25th Infantry Division - Hawaii

2nd Infantry Division - Korea 6th Infantry Division - Alaska

The four divisions in Germany and the divisions in Hawaii and Korea are active component only and have no reserve component roundout units. The 6th Infantry Division in Alaska has the unique status of being the only active duty division to be rounded out with an Army Reserve (versus National Guard) maneuver brigade, and a National Guard maneuver battalion. 1

## CONUS

The 82nd Airborne Division, the 101st Air Assault Division, and the 7th Light Infantry Division are unique CONUS divisions which have no roundout units. 2 Their unique organization, mission, and deployability criteria contribute to the fact that there are no roundout units in their force structure.

All the remaining eight CONUS divisions have reserve component roundout units from the National Guard. Six of the

divisions--1st Cavalry, 4th Infantry, 5th Infantry, 9th Infantry, 10th Mountain, and 24th Infantry--have a roundout maneuver brigade with its normal support slice also rounded out by National Guard units: one battalion of artillery in the division artillery, one battalion in the division support command, and one company of division troops. Two divisions--the 1st Infantry and the 2nd Armored--have only one roundout maneuver battalion each, but have the unusual posture of having one of their maneuver brigades forward deployed in Germany. 3

## RATIONALE

It is not difficult to determine what the underlying guidelines are for the Army's mix of roundout and active units. Units outside CONUS are a part of the U.S. policy of deterrence through forward presence. Roundout units are not appropriate for these organizations, as less strength (therefore capability) would be displayed than with a full-up active organization. The deterrence would have somewhat less credibility. The forward presence of units in Europe (four divisions) and in the Pacific (25th Infantry Division in Hawaii) are part of this deterrent force. Though the 2nd Infantry Division in Korea is also not rounded out, it does have an unusual structure. Even though the division has three complete brigade staffs, there are only six maneuver battalions, two in each brigade. Most analysts, military or civilian, would agree that the presence of 2nd Infantry Division in Korea has very little to do with the need for fighting strength. Rather, it is to demonstrate U.S. resolve

to assist in the defense of Korea, should armed aggression take place. Unlike Europe--where the massive U.S. force demonstrates U.S. resolve to defend Europe and is also an integral part of the defensive structure--the division in Korea is primarily a political statement. The 6th Infantry Division in Alaska--rounded out with an Army Reserve maneuver brigade, a National Guard maneuver battalion, a battalion of artillery, and a company of division troops-- although technically OCONUS, is not an integral part of U.S. deterrence through forward presence.

The unique units in CONUS are not rounded out for obvious reasons. The training associated with the 82nd Airborne and the 101st Air Assault Divisions, coupled with their world-wide, short notice contingency missions, makes roundout not desirable. Likewise, the 7th Light Infantry Division, a key part of the Army's "light" forces, has missions and deployability criteria that make roundou? not desirable. The Army Chief of Staff directed a relook at the 9th Infantry Division to accommodate conversion of one brigade to a National Guard roundout heavy brigade with a view toward creating a "medium" type force structure of three brigades. 4 Though documents may conflict as to the current status of the 9th Division, it has now been rounded out with the 81st Separate Mechanized Infantry Brigade, National Guard, from Washington State.

All the remaining active divisions in CONUS are rounded out to some extent. The supposition is that, if mobilization is ordered, their roundout units can either be brought to active duty and go with them or join them in theater at a later time. All roundout units have some specified length of time that it will take them to get their people and equipment together, marshal and move to a predetermined location, conduct required training, draw necessary supplies and equipment, and then deploy. The exact length of time is classified, but is dependent on the type unit (for example, an armor unit may take longer to be ready than an infantry unit), the mission and required date OCONUS of its parent organization, and the state of training and readiness of the roundout unit.

### **ENDNOTES**

- 1. Association of the United States Army, The Total Army at a Glance, factsheet, undated.
  - 2. Ibid.
  - 3. Ibid.
- 4. U.S. Army War College, Department of Military Strategy, Planning and Operations, <u>Forces/Capabilities Handbook</u>. <u>Volume I. Organizations</u>, Reference Text, 21 September 1989, p. 2-25.

#### CHAPTER III

#### **ISSUES**

Having looked at the background and laid the framework for where we are in terms of structure and the underlying rationale for rounding out active duty divisions with Reserve Component units, we can now address some of the issues that the roundout concept entails.

#### DOCTRINE

As the division commander stated, in the November 1989 interview previously mentioned, his division deployed OCONUS as a two brigade force and fights that way until his National Guard roundout brigade joins the division. He stated, "Now that really limits your flexibility. You train differently. The big thing is that you always find yourself with four round holes and only three pegs to plug in. With two brigades I am always looking back and all I've got is the aviation battalion, the attack battalion that is in reserve. That is just not a very comfortable feeling." 1

The basic doctrine on fighting divisions is captured in Field Manual (FM) 71-100, "Armored and Mechanized Division Operations," and FM 71-101, "Infantry, Airborne, and Air Assault Division Operations." FM 71-100 fully illustrates the concern of the division commander forced to fight or defend with a two brigade division. This manual discusses scheme of maneuver for the division in various types of scenarios. For example, in an

envelopment the division is depicted with an enveloping force of two brigades and a fixing force of one brigade. In an attack against a strong, well-prepared defense the division attacks with two brigades to make a hole to pass the third brigade through to continue and exploit the attack in the enemy's rear. In offensive operations with a main and supporting attack, the division uses a brigade on each axis with the third brigade following the main attack brigade to be ready to reinforce success and continue the attack. In an attack against a weak defense, the division attacks with one brigade and two brigades follow to exploit. 2

Defensive operations are similarly depicted and discussed in FM 71-100. Typically, the division is arrayed in the defense with all three brigades on line and holds some reserve force to plug penetrations or to conduct limited counterattacks.

The commander with a two brigade division has a problem. He cannot do what other divisions can do. His doctrine does not give him any clues so he probably must place heavy emphasis on multiple roles for his attack helicopters. This force is normally his "ace in the hole," but also must be a compensating force for the missing brigade. In the past he could beef up and rely on the armored cavalry squadron. However, Army initiatives are removing the tanks from this unit and therefore the commander is losing his "substitute" maneuver force.

FM 71-101 displays the same division arrangements, with some variations for the airborne and air assault divisions. The issue is that the "how to fight" doctrine does not address what is a

real world problem: seven of our active duty divisions do not have the active forces for which our doctrine is written. In all likelihood these divisions will have to fight or defend for some period of time until their reserve component roundout brigades can catch up to them.

An equally important issue that has scant information in the field manuals, even for a three brigade division force, is composition of a reserve force for either offensive or defensive operations. The division force deployed without its roundout brigade is so short of maneuver assets that constitution of a reserve force becomes a major issue for the division commander. FM 71-100 says that "In a division, reserves are normally provided by uncommitted units.... 3 Uncommitted units are something the commander fighting a two brigade division probably does not have. FM 71-101 lists the following missions for the reserve force: counterattack, reinforce brigades, support by fires, provide security forces, and construct battle positions and barriers. 4 The commander of a two brigade division relies heavily on his attack helicopters as a reserve force and may not be able to afford any ground maneuver unit in reserve. The doctrinal possibilities for missions of a reserve force are normally in the "too hard to do box" for him.

FM 90-14, "Rear Battle," says that the division is responsible for rear battle within its own boundaries. In areas like Europe and Korea, rear battle considerations are so huge that they take on major tactical and operational considerations of their own. This manual goes on to say that when the rear

battle threat exceeds the capability of assets located in the division rear area, the division commander may have to commit his reserves to the rear battle. 5 A division commander fighting an offensive or defensive battle with a two brigade division is in a bind. His combat power is such that he may be stretched just to hold his portion of the front. He probably will not have a reserve that can respond to the type of rear threat expected.

## TRAINING

Active divisions with roundout units normally do an outstanding job of integrating their reserve component force into every aspect of the division. Great pains are taken in this area and some excellent results have been achieved. But the fact is that the active forces of the division, irrespective of their competency levels, can fight better together as a team simply because they practice that way all year. The total number of days available to the reserve component force on an annual basis does not allow multiechelon building block training from squad through full brigade integration into the division fighting team. It just isn't possible, regardless of herculean efforts by outstanding personnel.

## MOBILIZATION

Reserve component roundout units called to active duty to deploy with their parent active division require a period of post-mobilization training to get "up to speed" with the rest of the division. 6 Round out units do not have the many field

training exercises, normal required proficiency training, and command post exercises that mark the routine of the active units of the division. Therefore the roundout units must obtain quick proficiency in critical skills. New and complicated systems, such as the M1 Abrams tank now fielded in the National Guard, require certification that cannot be ignored. For example, tank gunnery with the M1 tank is now a skill so different from the past that to attempt to go into battle without proficiency ensures lives and equipment will be lost. If the required post-mobilization training period matches the deployment schedule of the parent division, then the impact is minimized. Such may not be the case in a mobilization environment where OCONUS considerations require the fastest possible deployment of forces to the combat zone.

## **EQUIPMENT**

As little as five years ago, major equipment shortages existed in the reserve components. Even worse, the reserve components did not have as much of the modern equipment that was constantly flowing to active units. They therefore trained and planned to fight alongside their active units with different and sometimes inferior equipment. Those problems have largely been eliminated by Army initiatives that truly focused on the Total Army and have fielded the most modern equipment to reserve as well as active component forces. To say that the problem is gone would, however, be incorrect. Equipment mismatches between active and reserve forces still exist. Particularly with items

that are still short even in active forces--such as night vision equipment--reserve component forces are even shorter and will require cross-leveling of these items when they are called to active duty for deployment.

## NATIONAL WILL

At the end of the Vietnam war the roles of all the Army components were critically reviewed. At the heart of this discussion was one fact. "Although the pre-Vietnam Army was structured with a large portion of our combat support and combat service support units in the reserve forces (a structure which caused major problems when reserves were not mobilized for the war), the post-Vietnam Army is a much more interrelated structure that cannot be committed to sustained combat without reserve mobilization. With such a structure the Army went a long way toward insuring congressional support in any future conflict." 7 Almost 75 percent of our CONUS based divisions are rounded out with reserve component units. If our forward deployed forces require reinforcement or if a new theater opens requiring American forces, mobilization will be a virtual requirement.

#### ENDNOTES

- 1. U.S. Army War College, <u>Division Command Lessons Learned Program</u>, Project No: 1990-J, U.S. Army Military History Institute, p. 40-41.
- 2. U.S. Department of the Army, <u>Field Manual 71-100</u>, Armored and Mechanized Division Operations, Washington, 29 September 1978 w/change 1, pp. 4-12 4-16.

- 3. U.S. Department of the Army, <u>Field Manual 71-100</u>, Armored and Mechanized Division Operations, Washington, 29 September 1978 w/change 1, p. 5-21.
- 4. U.S. Department of the Army, <u>Field Manual 71-101</u>, Infantry, Airborne, and Air Assault Division Operations, Washington, 26 March 1980, p. 7-10.
- 5. U.S. Department of the Army, <u>Field Manual 90-14</u>, Rear Battle, Washington, 10 June 1985, p. 5-2.
- 6. U.S. Department of the Army, <u>Field Manual 25-5</u>, Training for Mobilization and War, Washington, 25 January 1985, pp. 18-20.
- 7. Harry G. Summers, Jr., On Strategy: The Vietnam War In Context, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, U.S. Army War College, 1981, p. 113.

#### CHAPTER IV

#### CONCLUSIONS

## DOCTRINE

We have a disconnect in how our doctrine says we will fight and the realities of the forces that we have to fight with. In fairness, the deployability of some roundout units is not a problem because their parent active unit does not deploy so early that the reserve component unit cannot join them prior to deployment. Yet, some of our war plans require CONUS divisions to deploy OCONUS, to be later joined by their roundout brigade and its equivalent division slice of support. The division will have to fight as a two brigade force for some period of time. Either their corps headquarters will have additional forces to supplement the division's combat power, or they will be given some mission requiring less combat power than a full fighting division. Neither situation is desirable if it can be avoided.

Traditionally, our doctrine has avoided unusual and "special case" requirements, leaving those to the imagination and initiative of the commander to deal with as the situation warrants. Roundout of active duty divisions has become the norm, however, and must be addressed in some way. We can postulate that the U.S. may bring several divisions out of Europe as a part of the draw-down of forces there and that there will be a desire to keep as many active division flags as possible. More extensive roundout may be seen as an easier way to reduce active

force structure. Depending on how hard the push may be, more than one brigade per active division could be rounded out with reserve component units. The precedent has already been set in the current roundout posture of the 6th Infantry Division and the past roundout posture of the 1st Cavalry Division. More depth in the roundout posture of active forces will require an even more intense review of tactical and operational doctrine.

What happens if the United States commits active forces but does not mobilize? It happened successfully in Panama because of the limited scope of the operation. Doctrine, however, must begin to address the impact that the roundout concept has on how we fight our divisions. If nothing else, doctrine should lay out options for the two brigade division—options for constitution of the division reserve and for key offensive and defensive situations where three brigades are normally an essential ingredient of the type operation planned.

### TRAINING

Training has largely been a positive fallout of the roundout concept. The integration of National Guard units, from company through brigade, into the active structure of a division has produced measurable improvements in readiness of the reserve component units involved. Part of the improvement has been the indirect effect of more frequent access to national training centers. Another indirect effect has simply been that more attention has been paid to the status of the reserve component unit and the things that are necessary to make improvements.

Training has not been exempt from this attention and has improved within the separate training activities of roundout units away from their parent active divisions, as well as in joint training and operations conducted with their active counterparts. In effect, we have begun to do the things that were required before "Total Army" and "roundout" ever became a battle cry. The state of training, equipment, personnel, and readiness should have always occupied the concern of our Total Army leaders. It took the impact of Vietnam and post-Vietnam analysis to begin the process in earnest.

Not all the effects of the roundout concept on training have been positive. The number of training hours that the reserve unit has available to it simply cannot fully prepare the unit to operate at the same level as the active units in the division. There is some degree of compensation in the homogeneity of the reserve unit and in the length of time that the personnel have been together, but they do not fully compensate for the problems that must be overcome. The number of field training exercises, command post exercises, and routine training events that the active division units participate in far exceeds the number participated in by their roundout units. The training and bonding of the war-fighting command team at division, brigade and battalion level often is accomplished without the leadership team of the roundout unit through nothing more complicated than timing and availability. Training on new and sophisticated pieces of equipment, such as the M1 tank and new radars, does not proceed at the same pace in active and reserve units because of the

disproportionate number of hands-on hours available to each component. The impact of this and other differences is not so much on the units of the active division, but rather on the leadership of the division. It is this leadership that must decide how to counteract the negative impacts of roundout and decide how to form the most effective fighting force based on the mission, circumstances, and forces available. Given a choice, most division commanders would chose to have a division that is not rounded out. Given that choice, however, most division commanders would also first consider what is best for the readiness of the Total Army.

## MOBILIZATION

The conclusions in mobilization are straightforward. It will generally take a reserve component unit longer to be ready to board transportation assets headed for an OCONUS location than it will their active counterparts. The factors are usually the status of equipment, personnel and readiness. In some cases, marshalling difficulties and long travel distances of the reserve component units are also factors. If there is lead time due to a slow build-up of warning indicators, this can be ameliorated in both active and reserve components by "leaning forward." This is easier for the active units because of the "captive" nature of their personnel than for the reserve component units. This is particularly true if local and national leaders do not take the necessary steps to release reserve personnel from civilian requirements, to prepare themselves and their equipment. All

units normally undergo some type of in-country training before commitment to the battle. When the reserve unit does join its active parent division in the theater, there will be a further delay while the reserve unit completes this training. Some type of command and control training may also take place for the reserve unit, but this can be done concurrently with in-country training.

## **EQUIPMENT**

All reserve component units, especially roundout units, have benefited from the increased focus on equipment in the Total Army. That it took such a dramatic set of circumstances as developed through Vietnam and the post-Vietnam years, is not a credit to our national focus on readiness. The Army has now made great strides in fielding modern equipment to active and reserve component units. The gap between the have's (active units) and the have not's (reserve units) has largely been eliminated. New and existing programs can no longer be considered and approved without a concept that embraces the Total Army. The roundout concept and the larger focus on Total Army was long overdue in placing priority on getting the reserve components to the same equipment level as the active Army.

#### NATIONAL WILL

While providing what was seen in the aftermath of Vietnam as a necessary safeguard, roundout has also somewhat reduced the

flexibility of active Army forces. This was probably a measured consideration when the concept was debated and was, in all likelihood, weighed against the overwhelming desire to build safeguards into the Total Army. These safeguards, built into structural changes (roundout), would insure that American involvement in a future major conflict would require national will to support commitment of American ground forces to the conflict. Since that time, however, much more binding safeguards, in the form of legislation, have mandated the ground rules under which the President can commit U.S. forces. The Vietnam War has also created in the American people and the American media, a sense that any commitment of American forces must be critically reviewed with an aim to prevent a "Vietnam" from occurring again.

There is nothing to prevent the President, over the dissenting advice of his military advisors, from committing American divisions to a conflict without mobilizing. In his own risk analysis he might consider, against some limited objectives, that bringing up roundout units could be avoided. The decision would have major implications for the war-fighters, but the military's history of "can-do" in the face of orders leads to the belief that it could happen.

The military has also carefully protected a corps worth of forces—the 82nd, 101st, and 7th Divisions—that are not immediately affected by roundout units even though long term support does require combat and combat service support reserve component units. There is nothing that prevents use of this

force without significant use of reserve component units. These factors and the impact of congressionally mandated restrictions on the President's ability to commit American forces have, to a large extent, overcome the impact of post-Vietnam structural changes in the Total Army. Changes which were aimed at ensuring congressional support for commitment of American forces.

#### CHAPTER V

#### WRAP-UP

The military, with good historical basis, has always feared a dramatic cut in force structure that would severely impair its ability to mobilize and defend the country at home or abroad. But current world circumstances tell even a novice prophet that both economics and politics will require the Army to reduce its strength. Past inclination has been to hang on to all 28 division flags and do anything possible to avoid cuts that would take down the skeletal framework upon which fighting forces could be built and deployed. That is no longer possible. The potential cuts being considered are too large to avoid taking active and reserve component divisions out of the force structure. What is required is a new look at how we are going to structure our ground forces. This is taking place right now within the walls of the Pentagon. The question is, is it new thinking or just a paring knife working around the edges? Why not fix some of the problems along with the required structure cuts?

As previously stated, if you ask a division commander if he wants a full active division or one that is rounded out, his honest answer must be the former. Nothing else would make sense in terms of his ability to train, motivate, sustain, care for and lead his division in such a way that he knows it is ready to fight, not tomorrow, but today. That fact does not negate the things that rounding out divisions has accomplished. It is

merely a reflection of the desirable in a world of choice.

Similar questions could be posed to the commander of a reserve component battalion or brigade. If he had the same priority as did the active component units—for fielding of modern new equipment, for enlistment of personnel, for money and for training facilities—would it matter whether or not his was a roundout unit?

The roundout concept and the focus on the larger picture of the Total Army, addressed and solved many problems such as described in the list of priorities in the above paragraph. However, these were not unique or new problems. They resulted, not from some basic structural flaw in the organizational structure of the Army, but from the neglect of both military and civilian leaders to take responsible action all through the years to deal with the readiness of the Total Army. The focus instead, was on active forces. When the Army accepted the responsibility of dealing equally with the two components of force structure and built a system that institutionalized it, it negated one of the fundamental requirements laid down for the concept of rounding out active divisions with reserve component units. When you add to that the legislative restrictions that deal with commitment of American forces, then the roundout concept must be critically reviewed for its utility in a smaller active force. This is particularly true as we move into a period in which we now must take down active and reserve divisions to accomplish force reductions.

The roundout concept, stripped of its lengthy rationale by

more responsible Total Army thinking and policy, has become nothing more than a stop-gap measure whose time has now come to an end. Hopefully it has not become such a "sacred cow" that we will not be afraid to discuss its validity in modern circumstances. The roundout concept should stand or fall based on its merits and its contributions, or lack thereof, to readiness of the Total Force.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

## Abandon the roundout concept.

National Guard and Army Reserve separate brigades should not be used in active component force structure. They should be formed into reserve divisions and then organized into regional corps. The current focus on priorities of equipment, dollars, people, and training must continue. The corps and divisions would provide training and experience for Guard officers at higher levels of command and staff. They would also provide for career development and advancement. Possibly up to three or four full corps could be formed to provide a strong reserve force for commitment in a national crisis. 1

Discontinuing the roundout concept might also require more active duty advisors to National Guard units. Some link might still be made to "sister" active units to share ideas and innovative war-fighting techniques from both sides. However, the relationship should be one of mutual sharing rather than dependency.

## Organize pure active divisions only.

There will be fewer divisions in the active structure of the future. Divisions that are currently rounded out should become pure active divisions, able to respond quickly to the full spectrum of national contingency missions. The division commander would then have his entire leadership chain, all his forces, and could train as he is going to fight. If committed with a limited mission within the 30-90 day requirement set by congress, the commander would have all his forces with him for the fight. Neither he nor Congress would have to worry with having to bring a major reserve unit to active duty and continually fighting the pressure to get them back to their civilian jobs. If a major sustained conflict requires commitment of American forces and Congress endorses such an action, then the active component gets to the battlefield with all their forces. ready for commitment when they arrive. Mobilized reserve component forces, if required and approved by Congress, come to the combat theater as complete packages of divisions or corps, able to be committed wherever necessary.

## **ENDNOTES**

1. Michael E. Byrne, "Mobilization of Round-Out ARNG Brigades", USAWC Military Studies Program Paper, USAWC, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, 16 April 1984, p. 13.

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